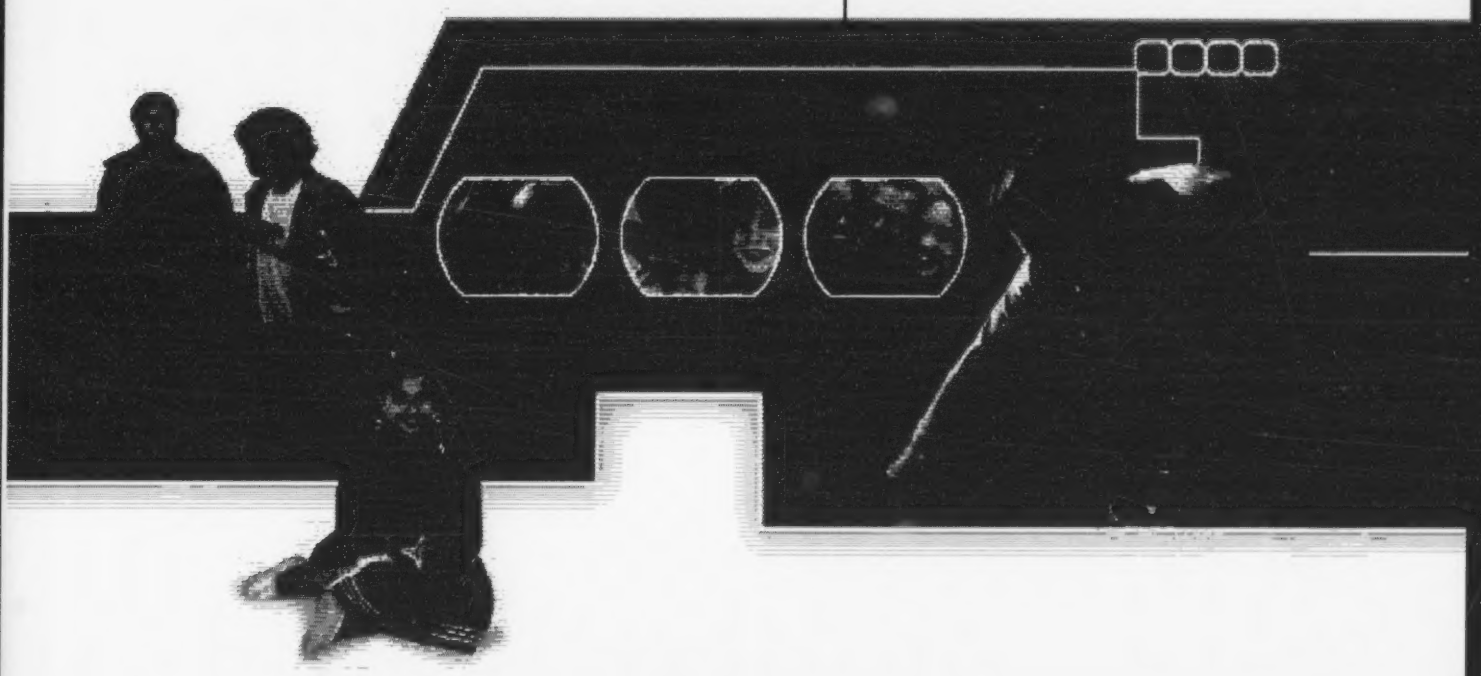
2003/2004

Annual Report



Children's Advocate

The Honourable Heather Forsyth
Minister of Children's Services
Executive Branch
424 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Minister:

I am pleased to present you with the Annual Report of the Children's Advocate. This Report covers the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004, during which your colleague, the Honourable Iris Evans, served as Minister of Children's Services.

Yours sincerely,

John Mould
Children's Advocate

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2003-2004 Highlights

The proposed *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (Enhancement Act) will bring a new responsibility to the Advocate's Office. The draft legislation states that the Advocate will "facilitate the involvement of family or community members in assisting in advocating for a child who is receiving services." This is a welcome addition. From the inception of the Office of the Children's Advocate in 1989, we have recognized that young people who 'weather life's storms' often do so because of the involvement of adults (teachers, coaches, neighbours, extended family members) who are interested in, and who are supportive of, them. The additional responsibility will provide us with a tool to more formally recognize the participation of adults ('Natural Advocates') who have existing and supportive relationships with young people in care.

Introduction of a Natural Advocate will not supplant the involvement of a formal Advocate. Even if they have the support of a Natural Advocate, young people receiving services under the Enhancement Act will have access to the Advocate's Office.

Resources

Organizational Development

The Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) undertook an initiative to develop a self-managed work team with the administrative staff who support front-line advocacy services. During the year the team developed service guidelines and priorities, core competencies and position descriptions, training plans, budget reporting tools, and mechanisms for maintaining the team. The Administrative Support Team provides support services, manages those services, and reports directly to the Children's Advocate.

Budget

The OCA utilized funds provided to the office in two key areas:

- $1,640,000 for Individual and Systemic Advocacy
- $477,000 for Community Advocacy Facilitation.

Information Systems

As a result of the restructuring of the OCA in 2002-2003, the introduction of Community Advocacy services, and the identification of new business requirements, the Office undertook a detailed review of its business needs. During the review, we determined that systems to support Systemic Advocacy and Community Advocacy were needed. In addition, the primary system of the office supporting individual advocacy (the Children's Advocate Information System, or CAIS) required numerous changes and additions sufficient to warrant a complete redevelopment of that system.

Planning and Reporting

During the year, the OCA provided information to the Ministry, Child and Family Services Authorities, and Delegated First Nations Agencies with regard to advocacy issues raised by children and youth, and regarding advocacy workshops conducted throughout the province.

Individual Advocacy

Children Served

The OCA served 170 more children in 2003-2004 than in the previous year. This number represented an overall 4% increase in the number of children served.

Children served in 2003-2004

Active as of April 1, 2003	533
New children in 2003-2004	3554
Total children served in 2003-2004	4087
Active as of April 1, 2004	456

Comparison with children served in previous years

Total children served in 2000-2001	3190
Total children served in 2001-2002	3931
Total children served in 2002-2003	3917
Total children served in 2003-2004	4087

During the fiscal year, the OCA also responded to 486 General Inquiries.

Referral Source

Children and youth are referred to the OCA from a variety of sources. The following indicates the source of referral for cases that were active during the year.

Self-Referral	922
Third Party	1787
Mandatory	358
Own Motion*	14
Anonymous	23
Total	**3104**

A single source may refer more than one child or youth, so the number of referrals will not match the number of new children served in the year.

* Initiated by the Children's Advocate

Demographics

Racial Origin

Caucasian	1916
Aboriginal	1430
Unknown	514
Mixed Race	159
Asian	31
Black	27
East Indian	10
Total	**4087**

Ages of Children Served

0-5 years	832
6-11 years	1098
12-17 years	1904
18-20 years	230
Over 20 years	17
Unknown	6
Total	**4087**

on me, she listened to my points

Community Advocacy Initiative

The redesign of the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA), initially identified in the 2001-2002 Annual Report, continued throughout 2003-2004. This realignment was crucial to the development and implementation of the Community Advocacy Initiative. Organizational restructuring allowed the dedication of two senior staff positions, along with significant Office resources, to support and develop community advocacy resources.

Two Community Advocacy Facilitators established valuable connections with Child and Family Services Authorities, Family and Community Support Services and community groups and agencies to promote the development of advocacy resources for vulnerable children and their families.

The goals of the Community Advocacy Initiative are to:

- Assist in the development of local and community advocacy initiatives
- Provide support to existing local advocacy programs
- Support local and natural advocates in their advocacy efforts
- Facilitate referrals to local advocacy resources.

These objectives are to be achieved through two simultaneous approaches.

Community Advocacy Workshops

The first approach to enhancing community advocacy resources was the development of a Community Advocacy Workshop. This workshop was designed to provide information and instruction on how interested citizens, community members, and agency staff can advocate on behalf of vulnerable children and families.

In June 2003, the Calgary Aboriginal Community Co-ordinating Council assisted the OCA with a pilot workshop. The workshop was then refined and made available to communities across Alberta.

Demand for the Community Advocacy Workshop grew quickly. Close to 600 community members participated in 49 workshops held across the province in nine out of the 10 Child and Family Services Authorities. Participants included staff from child-serving agencies, schools, health care, child welfare, First Nations agencies (urban and rural), and agencies providing services to adults and children with disabilities, including many recipients of various government services.

Post-workshop evaluations were positive and led to the development of two further workshops – one aimed at furthering the advocacy process described in the initial Community Advocacy Workshop, and a second designed to address the interest expressed around peer advocacy.

Community Advocacy Grant Funding Program

The second approach to enhancing and promoting advocacy services in communities was the establishment of the Community Advocacy Grant Funding Program. This program provides seed money to community-based organizations interested in developing and/or increasing the level of advocacy services to vulnerable children and their families. The success of the Advocacy Workshop approach resulted in slower development of Grant Funding Program than initially planned. Towards the end of the fiscal year, Grant Funding program guidelines were developed and initially marketed through community/agency presentations and the Community Advocacy Workshops.

The availability of the one-time seed funding was well received, although sustaining advocacy initiatives continues to be a serious consideration for those wishing to access the funding program. By year-end, an initial proposal was received, reviewed, and ultimately signed off by the Minister of Children's Services. As a result, seed monies were made available to a community group interested in furthering its existing efforts in the provision of family advocacy information and the development of locally trained advocates available to community members. The benefits of this funding to that particular community will be realized over a long period of time.

Given the success of the Community Advocacy Initiative, we determined to continue to market both the Community Advocacy Workshop and the Grant Funding Program in 2004-2005 – expecting that Grant Funding will receive added emphasis given the interest expressed by numerous agencies, community groups and Aboriginal communities. This would result in funding of more projects as these groups prepare and submit proposals.

Systemic Advocacy

Children and Youth with Complex Needs

The 2002-2003 Annual Report of the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) discussed the challenge inherent in a planning and service provision model for children and youth with multiple needs that necessitate a response from a variety of ministries. Because of the legislative obligation to respond to children in need of protection, child welfare service delivery is often left in the position of service provider of last resort without sufficient support or collaboration from the service systems of other government ministries.

A cross-ministry approach to this problem was initiated and housed under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative.* The Initiative has made progress over the past year. A document entitled "Policy Framework for Services for Children and Youth with Special and Complex Needs and their Families" was approved and distributed in July 2003 and followed up by "The Management of Integrated Services for Children and Youth with Complex Needs and their Families: Guidelines for Alberta Regional Teams" in August 2003. Regional co-ordinators and multi-disciplinary regional teams were developed throughout the year across the province.

By the end of the 2003-2004 operating year, however, no actual cases had been dealt with under the co-ordinated program at the level of the Regional Co-ordinating Committees. A useful policy framework is in place – the need at this point is to expedite its application in planning and service integration for individual children and youth.

Face Down Restraints

Last year's Annual Report documented the OCA's initial raising of this issue and the progressive steps taken by the Ministry of Children's Services. These initial positive steps have been followed up, and both Ministry policy related to the delivery of child welfare services and the standards of the external body that accredits contract services now clearly prohibit the use of face down restraints.

* Introduced in 1998, the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) is a collaborative partnership of government ministries working together on issues affecting children and youth.

Permanency Planning

This is one of the most persistent systemic issues identified by the OCA over the years. Comments related to permanency planning can be found in virtually every one of the preceding fourteen annual reports of the Office.

While evidence to date does not indicate resolution of this challenge, it is clear that the Department and the related service delivery systems have identified this as a priority area to address under the proposed *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

Interprovincial Protocol

This issue was originally raised in our 2001-2002 Annual Report. At that time, the interprovincial protocol* governing placements into the province by other jurisdictions indicated that the placing jurisdiction "may request" courtesy supervision by the receiving jurisdiction. Our request had been that the department take this back to the Interprovincial Table arguing that such courtesy supervision should be a requirement of the process.

These negotiations were successfully concluded. The newly-drafted protocol states:

> "Prior to placing a child or young adult in a residential care facility in a receiving province, the originating province shall consult with the receiving province to determine ... the ability of the receiving province to adequately provide courtesy supervision" (emphasis ours)

and further

> "On agreeing to the placement of a child or young adult in a residential care facility and at the request of an originating province, the receiving province shall:
> (a) monitor the placement or provide courtesy supervision; and
> (b) complete and forward progress reports to the originating province according to its standards or as otherwise negotiated with the originating province."

* The Provincial/Territorial Protocol on Children and Families Moving between Provinces and Territories is an agreement among Provincial Governments and Territories governing interprovincial child welfare work. The material quoted here is drawn from a proposed redrafting of the guidelines

Trust Accounts for Children in Care

Through the OCA's individual advocacy work, a number of issues relating to trust funds for children under the permanent care of the Director came to our attention. Many of these related to First Nations children for whom Band payments were being held in trust under the federal department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). Some concerns were also identified by youth in relation to trust funds administered by the Alberta Public Trustee.

These concerns included the following:

- Youth complaining that they were required to pay for legal services out of their trust accounts (INAC)
- Youth complaining that family members were inappropriately accessing trust funds (INAC and Public Trustee)
- Aboriginal communities complaining that there are not sufficient procedural safeguards to protect the trust accounts (INAC)
- Caseworkers complaining that they and the young people were not able to access information regarding such trusts (INAC and Public Trustee)
- Complaints from youth that assets within the trust funds were not always competently managed(Public Trustee).

Perhaps the most worrisome behaviour reported was through the claims of a number of youth and caseworkers from the four First Nations at Hobbema that some lawyers were fraudulently billing trust accounts. Following an investigation, the Law Society of Alberta disciplined at least three Alberta lawyers for inappropriately accessing federal trust funds of First Nations youth – in one case to a total of almost $500,000.

It is clear that the authority for administering these trusts lies with INAC or with the Public Trustee. The significant questions for the OCA concern the responsibilities of the Director (as sole legal guardian) to assist young people in their interactions with these bodies. As a 'prudent parent,' what is the fiduciary role of the Director in supporting children and youth to hold these bodies accountable? When children and youth under the permanent care of the Director complain that they cannot get information from the body administering the trust, or complain that they don't agree with expenditures made from the trust, or question whether the assets are being well managed, to whom do they turn for support in exploring or pressing these claims? Correspondence to this effect went to the Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Quality, in May 2003.

Erratum

The print version of the 2003-2004 Annual Report of the Children's Advocate was unclear about an issue around Trust Accounts for Children in Care outlined on page 9 of the Report.

It is important to note that the concerns expressed about the Office of the Public Trustee are allegations only and have not been substantiated by our office. The role of the OCA is to encourage the Director, as legal guardian, to assist youth to resolve these concerns.

Smoking in Foster Homes

Early in 2003, a number of parties, including case managers, had raised concerns with the OCA regarding the lack of guidelines to control smoking in foster homes. They pointed out that current policy prohibited the use of smoking materials in all group care facilities, and the argument was that the lack of such restrictions for foster care created a health concern for children in such placements.

The OCA wrote to the Department requesting a review of policy in this area in July 2003. In October, the Department responded indicating that review of policy would be considered. In further discussions with the Department, the OCA learned that negotiations were underway with the Alberta Foster Parent Association with the long-term goal of a policy of no smoking in foster homes.

Dealing with Young People Based on their Chronological Age versus their "Mental, Emotional, and Physical Stage of Development"

Many youth in care, as well as professionals providing support services to these youth, have expressed the concern that expectations of them reflected in case plans, and in the decision-making of case managers, are often based on the person's chronological age rather than an assessment of his or her capacity to handle age-related responsibilities and expectations. The most dramatic examples appear to be decisions about moving youth into Supported Independent Living (SIL) arrangements and the decision to terminate services at 18, leaving young people "on their own." Based on our work with youth who "failed" their SIL experience, we believe that much of the case manager's analysis has to do with the young person's practical knowledge and ability with respect to independent living, rather than an assessment of his or her emotional and psychological preparedness to meet the challenges of being independent. The great misunderstanding seems to be around the amount of support and coaching youth in care need to deal with the responsibilities assigned to them.

While all young people face challenges in managing the transition to adulthood and independence, the challenges are exacerbated for youth in care. The OCA 2002-2003 Annual Report, under 'Transitional supports' argued that:

> "Youth removed from natural care-providers, who have experienced multiple moves, numerous child welfare workers and many shifts in their case plans, are frequently unable to deal with the transition from a more structured environment where adults guide or decide, to one where everything is in their hands. Youth may find, after an extended period of time in care, that they are

unprepared for independence, not because they lack the knowledge and skills associated with independence, but because they feel abandoned and alone. These youth continue to struggle with issues associated to why they were in care in the first place and/or with what happened to them while in care; with incomplete mastery of the tasks of adolescence; and, with the whole new set of expectations associated with adulthood. The burden is greatest for young adults who have no natural or substitute family relationships to call on."

The legislation supports the point being made here. *The Child Welfare Act* states in the "Matters to be considered":

"2 (h) any decision concerning the placement of a child outside the child's family should take into account …

(iv) the mental, emotional and physical needs of the child and the child's mental, emotional and physical stage of development."

While there is a clear expectation in legislation for a consideration of the young person's progress in relation to normal growth and development when planning for him or her, this does not seem to be supported in policy and consequently there is little effective recourse when it is not reflected in practice.

Our individual advocacy experience demonstrates that this lack is not only an issue for adolescents, but applies generally to children in care. The OCA suggests that the ultimate solution is a change in practice whereby more focus is placed on an understanding of the mental, emotional, and physical characteristics of children and youth being served. Toward this end, the OCA suggests that a provincial policy be developed requiring that an analysis of these capacities be used in planning for all young people in care, including those adolescents transitioning to more independent placements and out of care. The OCA would then expect to see a change in case practice whereby Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) and Delegated First Nations Agencies (DFNAs) could demonstrate that such assessments were on file and being used in the development of plans, including transition plans.

This is an ongoing area of dialogue between the OCA and the Ministry.

Youth Participation in Decision-making when Receiving Services under a Custody Agreement with Guardian

Young people told Advocates that, in some situations when they were in care under a Custody Agreement with Guardian, they were not being included in developing and signing case plans. The most contentious issue arose when there was a decision to cancel the Custody agreement and return a young person home when the young person was not in agreement. Many young people in such circumstances claimed they were not involved in reviewing the decision, and were not informed that they had the right to dissent or to challenge such decisions.

This concern was outlined in correspondence with the Department and led to a discussion at the Provincial Enhancement Table.* The discussion confirmed the importance of involving all youth, regardless of status, in decision-making. The discussion also provided a specific policy clarification that youth over the age of 12 years should be signatories to all plans and involved in planning processes that affect them.

Involvement of Non-Custodial Guardians

Based on individual advocacy experience, the OCA identified a potential problem with the involvement of non-custodial guardians in child welfare practice. Both youth in care and non-custodial guardians complained that the non-custodial guardian was often not informed about, consulted about, or involved in decision-making. Complaints were also received that these guardians were often refused access to their children. The OCA reviewed the Child Welfare Handbook and could find no direction clarifying what obligation the child welfare system has to contact, inform, and involve non-custodial guardians when a child comes into care. Communication went to the Department suggesting that policy clarification in this area would be helpful.

* The Provincial Enhancement Table is a forum that brings together representatives from each CFSA and DFNA, along with Departmental staff from the Service Quality Division, to assess and formulate policy to guide child intervention services

Advocacy as Practised by the Office of the Children's Advocate

There are two key assumptions that underlie the original development and the ongoing operation of the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA):

- Children and youth have certain rights and interests, some generic and some pertaining to their status in the child welfare system
- The empowerment of children and youth, through promoting their active participation in the planning and decision making process, is a process that strongly enhances both the quality of decision making within the system and the healthy development of those young people served by the system.

With respect to the first point we acknowledge that there are many people who effectively advocate for young people receiving services from the child welfare system. These include parents, caseworkers, caregivers, therapists, etc. However, there are situations in which such parties' ability or effectiveness in advocating for children is limited. For example, parents may be alienated from children because of abusive relationships, or may not have the ability to effectively deal with formal institutional systems because of their own personal problems or disadvantaged situations. Caseworkers may be compromised in advocating for youth when, as decision-makers, a best interest test leads them to make decisions that the youth strongly oppose.

Additionally, it is widely recognized that bureaucratic organizations, despite the best efforts of committed people within them, get diverted from the stated service aims of the institution. They become self-serving and at times ineffective in responding to the needs of those that the organization is intended to serve.

The child welfare system is vested with far-reaching authority to impact the lives and experiences of the children it serves. It has the potential to make decisions that are far more intrusive and involve far greater curtailment of liberty than would be the case for parents in a normal family setting. The impact of a system with such potential authority can be to disempower children and youth who, by their nature and experiences, already have limited capacity to advance their own cause.

For all of these reasons it was felt important to provide a resource to children and youth receiving child welfare services that focuses exclusively on protecting their rights and interests and supporting their participation in the system.

Role of the Office of the Children's Advocate

The Office of the Children's Advocate was originally established in 1989 through an amendment to the *Child Welfare Act*. The two primary responsibilities of the Office are:

- To represent individual children and youth served under the *Child Welfare Act* (individual advocacy)
- To provide information and advice to the Minister and the Minister's staff with respect to the welfare and the interests of, and the provision of services to, the children and youth who receive services under the *Child Welfare Act* (systemic advocacy).

The Office carries out the individual advocacy function by protecting the rights and by advancing the interests and viewpoints of young people receiving services. Understanding the absence of decision-making authority on the part of the Advocate, and understanding that the child's right to be heard is not tantamount to a right to decide, are both critical in appreciating the Advocate's role.

If an Advocate is involved with a youth who is able to provide instruction, the Advocate will take a viewpoint focus. The Advocate will align with the youth and assist him or her to participate in the decision-making process toward the outcomes the youth has identified. Based on an essential understanding by all parties that the Advocate has no decision-making authority, the Advocate comes to the process as a partisan support for the youth. The underlying assumption is that decisions will be better informed if made with active reference to the expressed views of the youth, and that the youth's supported participation can assist the youth to be heard by the bureaucracy that has the authority to make life-shaping decisions on his or her behalf.

If an Advocate is involved with a child who is unable to provide instruction, the Advocate will take an interest focus. The focus of advocacy will be to ensure all available information is considered in decision-making processes and that decisions take into account active reference to the young person's interests including those referenced in the "Matters to be considered" section of the *Child Welfare Act*.*

* See Appendix G

Systemic advocacy work pools the experience gained from individual advocacy activities in identifying and assessing issues and deficiencies in how youth experience services received, and communicating these to those responsible in the service delivery system for the refinement of policy and/or the effectiveness of practice.

Principles and Values

Within the OCA, the delivery of advocacy services is guided by a set of articulated principles and values. It is expected that these influence not only the structure and operation of the Office in general, but also the activity and behaviour of individual Advocates. These include the following:

- **Empowerment** – Advocacy's prime focus is the empowerment of the young person to speak for him/herself and to participate in planning and decision-making
- **Child-Focused Practice** – The young person is the client of the Children's Advocate. This requires compassion, respect and empathy for the young person's perspective
- **Advocacy is a Shared Responsibility** – The community's involvement and assumption of responsibility are key considerations. The goal is to involve, empower and support, rather than to replace natural advocates
- **Foregoing the Use of Authority** – An Advocate's effectiveness depends on the quality and cogency of facts, upon persuasion, and upon access to progressive levels of decision-makers and decision-making processes rather than the authority to dictate outcomes. This implies sharing of information, the encouragement of and respect for diversity of opinion, and the absence of a win/lose view of problem-solving
- **Informality** – An informal, non-intrusive style is key to effective advocacy. Informally negotiated, collaborative strategies, at the organizational level closest to the child, are the preferred approaches to problem resolution – not formal or adversarial processes. However, the Advocate's obligation to the young person may require strategies which involve progressively higher levels of organizational authority or which resort to more formal mechanisms such as courts or appeal panels
- **Holistic Perspective** – Decision-making about the life of an individual can benefit from a variety of perspectives, disciplines, and values that consider the whole person in his/her environment.

Child Welfare Act

This excerpt from the Act describes the structure and duties of the OCA.

Office of Children's Advocate

3(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Minister, appoint a Children's Advocate, who shall hold office for a term not exceeding 5 years.

(2) The Minister may authorize and provide for the payment of the remuneration and expenses of the Children's Advocate and for the office and staff of the Children's Advocate.

(3) The Children's Advocate shall

(a) advise the Minister on matters relating to the welfare and interests of children who receive services under this Act and the provision of those services;

(b) receive, review and investigate complaints or concerns that come to the attention of the Children's Advocate respecting children who receive services under this Act;

(c) represent the rights, interests and viewpoints of children who receive service under this Act;

(d) perform additional duties and functions that are conferred on the Children's Advocate by the regulations or are from time to time assigned to the Children's Advocate by the Minister;

(e) prepare and submit annual reports to the Minister respecting the exercise of the duties and functions of the Children's Advocate.

(4) On receiving a report under subsection (3)(e), the Minister shall lay a copy of the report before the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting, and if not, within 15 days after the commencement of the next ensuing sitting.

(5) For the purpose of performing the duties and functions of the Children's Advocate, the Children's Advocate may

(a) communicate with and visit a child who is receiving services under this Act or a guardian or other person who represents the child;

(b) have access to information relating to a child that is in the possession of a director or other person or agency providing services to a child on behalf of a director;

(c) at the request of a child who is receiving services under this Act, the Minister or any person acting on the child's behalf, receive, review or investigate and make recommendations regarding any matters relating to the provision of services to the child under this Act;

(d) provide information relating to, speak on behalf of and otherwise represent a child who is receiving services under this Act when major decisions relating to the child are being made under this Act;

(e) on his own initiative or at the request of a child who is receiving services under this Act, assist in appealing or reviewing a decision of a director relating to the child;

(f) provide assistance and advice to an Appeal Panel or a Court with respect to a child who is receiving services under the Act.

(6) The Children's Advocate may delegate any duty or function conferred or imposed on the Children's Advocate under this Act or the regulations in respect of a child

(a) to a person employed or engaged in the administration of this Act, or

(b) to a person who provides care to the child, represents the child or is concerned about the welfare of the child.

1988 c15 s4; 1990 c29 s3

Child Welfare Act

This excerpt from the Act describes the philosophical and value framework to be applied when any decision is made in relation to children who are considered to be in need of protection. It is important in that it not only sets out the overriding "best interest test" but also provides more specific considerations to help guide decision-making.

Matters to be considered

2 A Court and all persons shall exercise any authority or make any decision relating to a child who is in need of protective services under this Act in the best interests of the child and in doing so shall consider the following as well as any other relevant matter:

(a) the family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved;

(b) the interests of a child should be recognized and protected;

(c) the family has the right to the least invasion of its privacy and interference with its freedom that is compatible with its own interest, the interest of the individual family members and society;

(d) a child, if the child is capable of forming an opinion, is entitled to an opportunity to express that opinion on matters affecting the child, and the child's opinion should be considered by those making decisions that affect the child;

(e) the family is responsible for the care, supervision and maintenance of its children and every child should have an opportunity to be a wanted and valued member of a family, and to that end

(i) if protective services are necessary to assist the family in providing for the care of a child, those services should be provided to the family insofar as it is reasonably practicable to do so in order to support the family unit and to prevent the need to remove the child from the family, and

(ii) a child should be removed from the child's family only when other less intrusive measures are not sufficient to protect the survival, security or development of the child;

(f) any decision concerning the removal of a child from the child's family should take into account

(i) the benefits to the child of maintaining, wherever possible, the child's familial, cultural, social and religious heritage,

(ii) the benefits to the child of stability and continuity of care and relationships,

(iii) the risks to the child if the child remains with the family, is removed from the family or is returned to the family, and

(iv) the merits of allowing the child to remain with the family compared to the merits of removing the child from the family;

(g) if it is not inconsistent with the protection of a child who may be in need of protective services, the child's family should be referred to community resources for services that would support and preserve the family and prevent the need for any other intervention under this Act;

(h) any decision concerning the placement of a child outside the child's family should take into account

(i) the benefits to the child of a placement that respects the child's familial, cultural, social and religious heritage,

(ii) the benefits to the child of stability and continuity of care and relationships,

(iii) the benefits to the child of a placement within or as close as possible to the child's home community,

(iv) the mental, emotional and physical needs of the child and the child's mental, emotional and physical stage of development, and

(v) whether the proposed placement is suitable for the child;

(i) the provision of protective services is intended to remedy or alleviate the condition that caused the child to be in need of intervention;

(j) if a child is being provided with care under this Act, the child should be provided with a level of care that is adequate to meet the needs of the child and consistent with community standards and available resources;

(k) if a child is being provided with care under this Act, a plan for the care of a child should be developed that will address the child's need to stability and continuity of care and relationships;

(l) a person who assumes responsibility for the care of a child under this Act should endeavour to make the child aware of the child's familial, cultural, social and religious heritage;

(m) there should be no unreasonable delay in making or implementing a decision affecting a child.

1984 cC-8.1 s2; 1988 c15 s3

Office of the Children's Advocate
Organizational Chart 2003-2004

Iris Evans
Minister
Children's Services

John Mould
Children's
Advocate

Community Advocacy Initiative

Facilitators
Bob C. Howard
Bob Johnson

Individual and Systemic Advocacy

Advocates
Jim Beaton
Mike Day
Jane Ellenor
Dan Gannon
Linda Golding
Chris Hanson
Anne Healy
Anne Hunt
Brian Leonard
Donna Servetnyk
Ken Tralnberg
Sherry Wheeler
Marilyn Wilson

Program Support

Sharen Osinchuk
Manager,
Program Resources

Anita Cousineau
Technical Resource
Administrator

Administrative Support Services

Admin Support Team
Connie Bezushko
Jean Bouvier
Donna Lemieux
Audrey Walton

Alberta Children's Services